



April 2026

Mama Green

Crowns Kijani Forestry as the Powerhouse of Restoration



GULU

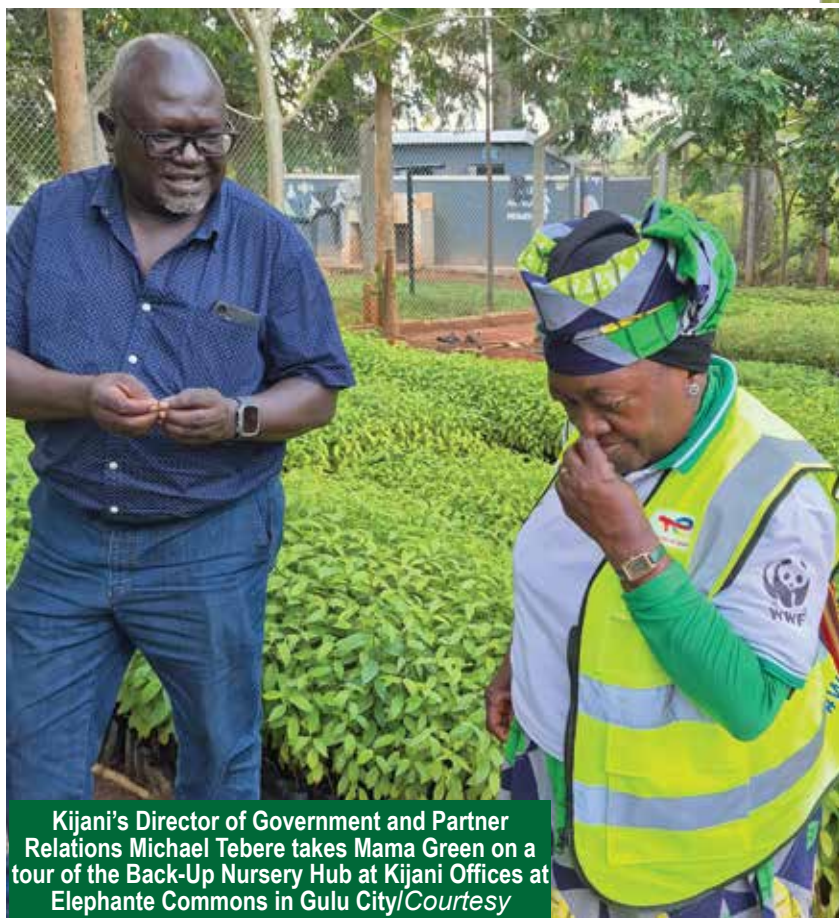
When the lady known across Uganda as "Mama Green" arrived in Gulu City on 23rd April 2026, she wasn't just there to check boxes—she was there to verify a phenomenon. Hajjat Aphwa Kaawaase Sebyala, a titan of environmental advocacy, spent two days embedded with Kijani Forestry, assessing our contribution to the national Running Out Of Trees (ROOTs) Campaign.

The ROOTs Campaign is Uganda's boldest answer to deforestation to date: a mission led by the Ministry of Water and Environment to plant 200 million trees over five years – 40 million trees a year, translating symbolically to one tree for every Ugandan.

While the initiative attracts partnerships from giants like TotalEnergies, Stanbic Bank, and Uganda Breweries, the Ministry has been quietly waiting for specific sets of numbers from 'smaller' partners to hit the national tally. They had an inkling that when Kijani Forestry opens its books, the target of 40 million trees could be met—or even surpassed. In any case, Kijani Forestry had set itself a target of 30 million trees for 2026 alone!

Hajjat Sebyala is not your typical auditor. She is a pioneer who believes conservation should be a celebration, not a chore. From "Green Weddings" and "Green Graduations" to "Mentoring Walks" at Makerere University Business School, she has spent years weaving sustainability into the very fabric of Ugandan culture. To her, greening is a lifestyle. Yet, even for a woman who has seen it all, the operations Kijani is implementing with smallholder farmers across 30 districts in northern Uganda were a revelation that promised to shift the entire national conversation on tree planting and growing.

"I have visited many actors in greening, but the scale at which Kijani is greening Uganda is astounding,"



Kijani's Director of Government and Partner Relations Michael Tebere takes Mama Green on a tour of the Back-Up Nursery Hub at Kijani Offices at Elephante Commons in Gulu City/Courtesy

Hajjat remarked, visibly moved by the sight of thousands of seedlings at the Kijani Back-Up Nursery in Gulu City – one of 7,375 Nursery Hubs producing seedlings for farmers – ready to reclaim the horizon. "The result of your work could make so much noise out there that you should be walking with your heads high all the time. In fact, Kijani deserves a seat at the high table of forestry sector actors!"

The numbers back up her praise. With a staggering 89,000+ farmers and over 21 million trees already breathing life back into the soil as of end-of-April 2026, Kijani is no longer just a participant in the ROOTs Campaign – it could become its backbone. By integrating its massive dataset into the National Tree Planting and Monitoring Tool, Kijani is proving that Uganda's 200-million-tree dream isn't just a target on a flyer – it is a reality taking root in smallholder farmers' gardens

across northern Uganda.

As Kijani Forestry prepares to submit its data to the Ministry of Water and Environment, the implications for the national tally are profound. By inputting its data through the National Tree Planting and Monitoring Tool, Kijani is shifting the narrative from mere saplings in the ground to a sophisticated system of "Green Gold" that supports the 10-Fold Growth Strategy. This data – potentially the largest single contribution to the ROOTs initiative – represents more than just a metric; it is a testament to the power of public-private partnerships in driving regional development and ecological restoration. For the Ministry, this submission is the missing piece of the puzzle, proving that when community-led initiatives scale, the national goal of 40 million trees annually is not just attainable, but a benchmark to be exceeded.

Kijani Pays Shs334.7m to 13,496 Households in Annual Incentives

GULU - 20,787,218 Trees. 89,368 Farmers. 29

Districts: These are not just numbers on a spreadsheet; they represent 1st Season Planting Figures of the 30m Trees Kijani Forestry plans for 2026. But as every tree grower knows, a staggering statistic can often mask a simple, uncomfortable truth: *a tree planted is not necessarily a tree grown.*

"Kijani has consciously made it a point to distinguish between tree planting and tree growing," explains CEO Quinn Neely. "To us, tree planting is an act; tree growing is a commitment."

This philosophy is the inspiration behind the innovation that is Kijani's Annual Tree Survival Incentive Payments, a revolutionary program designed to ensure that the millions of tree-seeds we distribute are potted and nurtured into seedlings, then transplanted and grown into trees that actually reach maturity. The incentive payments – UGX100 per Tree for Year 1; and UGX200 per Tree for Years 2 through to 5 – cover the first five years of tree growth. To date, this commitment has translated into UGX 334,730,600 paid directly into the hands of 13,496 farmers across Northern Uganda.

Most climate change interventions celebrate the day a tree is put in the dirt. Kijani celebrates the years it stays there. We focus on "tree tenure" – habituating farmers to view trees as long-term assets.

Why Incentivize Tree Survival?

By providing annual cash incentives during the critical 5-Year "Valley of Death" window, Kijani turns the labor of weeding, pruning, and protecting trees into an advance income stream for rural households.

This model is building a new level of accountability and partnership. As Quinn Neely puts it: "This is a huge step for us. It means more income to the farmers, more trust in our word and our work, and more motivation to plant and grow trees with us. We are even paying farmers who are growing trees they planted with us before 2025 when we commenced paying this incentive."

Besides the Annual Incentive Payments, Kijani guarantees its farmers to off-take woodfuel and timber at farm-gate prices at the time of harvest. The third income stream for Kijani Farmers kicks in from Year 10: UGX200 per Tree for the next 40 years. Beat that!



How Kijani is contributing to NDPIV

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By the time the morning sun streaks across the rooms of urban dwellers in Gulu City, Nancy Labong, 35, is already working in her woodlot of Giant Lira (Melia azedarach) and White Teak (Gmelina arborea). She beams with a smile as she weeds the flourishing lines of groundnuts she has intercropped with these nitrogen-fixing trees. The air in her woodlot in Agung Village, Oding Parish in Unyama Sub-County, Gulu District, is rustling with the sound of nature's symphony.

Labong is one of 89,000 smallholder farmers across 29 districts who are pioneering a massive transformation in traditional smallholder farming across Northern Uganda: transitioning from annual cropping in mono-cultures to innovative agroforestry – integrating trees with crops.

Agroforestry was a key intervention in the Agro-Industrialization Programme in the Third National Development Plan (2020/21-2024/25). This intervention has been carried forward into the Fourth National Development Plan (2025/26-2029/30). Kijani's integration of timber, woodfuel, and live fencing trees in traditional cropping patterns across northern Uganda is turning smallholder farmers from mere subsistence into commercial farmers building a stable foundation for Uganda's nascent carbon industry.

Through its carbon development methodology, Kijani's agroforestry approach has commercialized and formalized Labong's farming practices, turning her hitherto annual groundnut garden into a perennial carbon sink from which she now stands to earn from three income streams besides her annual groundnut crop: Annual Tree Survival Incentive Payments from Year 1 through to Year 5; woodfuel and timber harvests from Year 5 and 10 onwards; and Carbon Payments for the next 40 Years starting in Year 10.

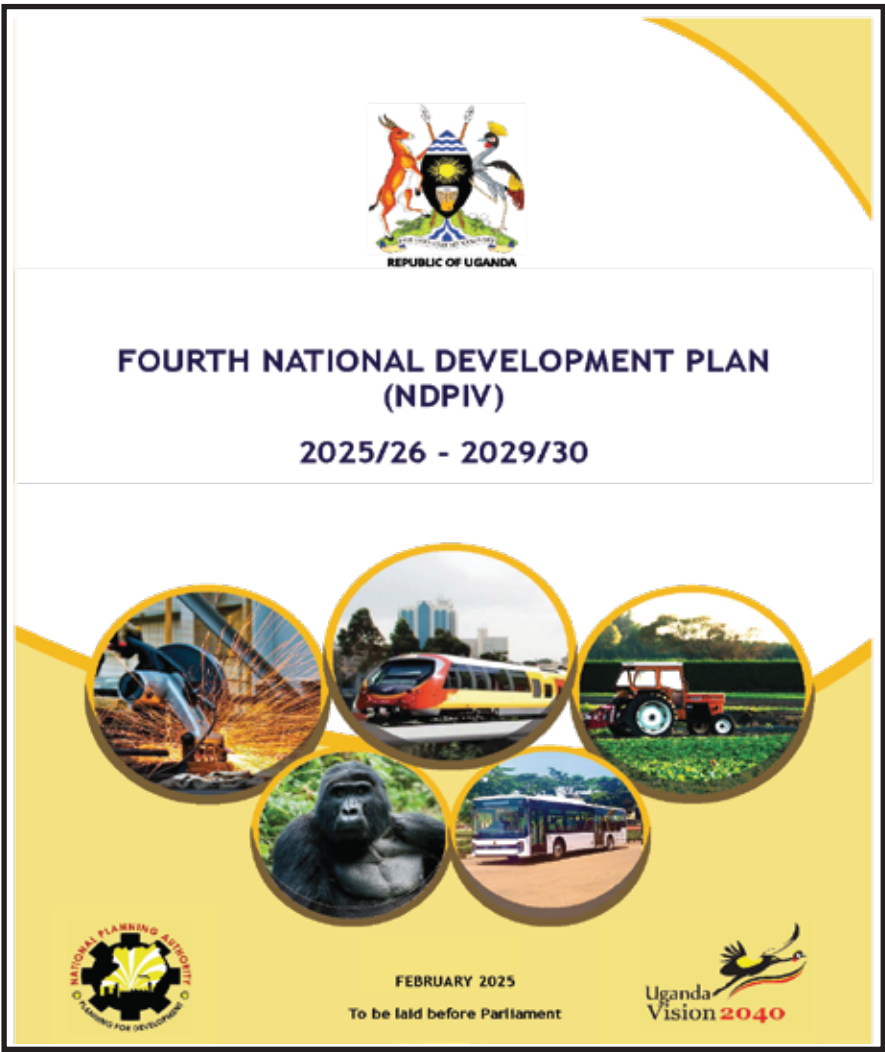
The best thing about Labong's transformation is the contract-guaranteed off-take of the charcoal produced from her sustainably farmed White Teak and the timber from her Giant Lira. These guarantees contribute directly to the two accelerator actions of the Agro-Industrial Development Anchor in Uganda's 10-Fold Growth Strategy.

As Uganda embarks on the journey of the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV), the national vision has evolved toward a singular, bold objective: expanding GDP from USD 50 billion to USD 500 billion by 2040. While the target is economic, one of the engines is environmental. In Northern Uganda, Kijani Forestry's model of incentivized agroforestry has emerged as a catalyst, proving that environmental restoration and conservation is not a cost to be borne, but a lucrative investment that fuels national growth.

Monetizing the Peasant Economy
A core tenet of Uganda Vision 2040 is the transformation of a peasant society into a modern, prosperous one. For lead farmers like Labong, this transition is personal: "I used to see my land only in terms of the next harvest of maize or



Nancy Labong poses in her woodlot of Melia in Unyama /Courtesy



groundnuts," she says. "Now, when I look at my rows of Melia and Gmelina, I see a bank account that grows while I sleep. These trees are my children's university fees".

By integrating indigenous timber and woodfuel trees directly into traditional cropping patterns, Kijani is helping the government monetize the 39% of households currently stuck in the subsistence economy. This approach

maximizes "wealth per acre," a critical metric for success in the 10-Fold Growth Strategy. Through intercropping, the land remains productive for food today while maturing into a massive timber and energy asset for tomorrow.

Energy Security and the Modernized Charcoal Value Chain
The NDP IV framework identifies climate change as a systemic risk, and with over 90% Ugandan households still

reliant on biomass for energy, tree cover depletion is an urgent energy security threat. Kijani's response is thorough and far-reaching: extending back to restoration of natural forests and woodlands to ensure a sustainable supply of tree seed; collection and banking of tree seed for supplying the thousands of nursery hubs that put cost-effective tree seedling production in the hands of farmers; motivating farmers to plant and grow the trees in the first five years through Kijani's Annual Tree Survival Incentive Payments; carefully harvesting the mature woodfuel to ensure the stumps re-grow while the harvested woodfuel is carefully processed and carbonized to maximize charcoal quality and quantity; organizing woodfuel farmers into associations for bulking of the charcoal in warehouses for modern packaging and branding for the market. All this is to modernize the charcoal industry and prepare Uganda to join the likes of Namibia, South Africa and Nigeria in the lucrative international charcoal export market with a verifiable, sustainable product.

Traceability and Trust
The most innovative thread in this story is the leap into digital transformation – the fourth Anchor Area in Uganda's 10-Fold Growth Strategy. Labong's field day often includes a visit from a Kijani Farmer Coordinator equipped with a Smartphone blinking with Kijani's proprietary Tree Mapping App. This proprietary technology maps every tree, creating a Chain-of-Custody system that ensures Traceability, Transparency, and Accountability (TTA) from seed to market.
"Our Traceability, Transparency, and Accountability App does exactly what it

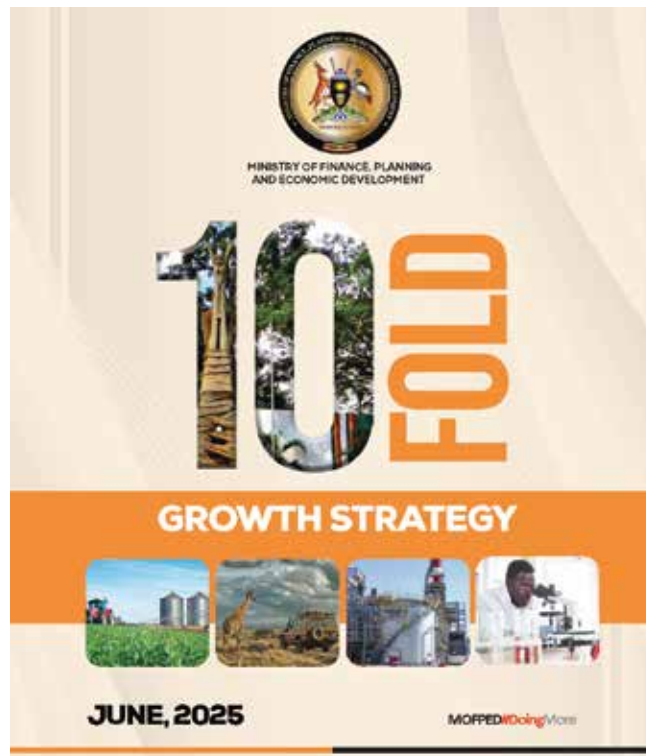
and the 10-Fold Growth Strategy

says: it scans a QR code on the charcoal package in the market place and identifies the species of tree the charcoal was made from; when they were harvested and carbonized; the farmer who grew the trees; the farmer group they belong to; and even the nursery hub that produced the seedlings. This bright light of transparency in the otherwise opaque traditional charcoal industry is a key tool for accountability to both the environment and to government," says Michael Tebere, Kijani's Director of Government and Partner Relations.

This level of traceability, transparency and accountability should allow for the strict enforcement of environmental laws, such as Executive Order No. 3 of 2023, that is in place to protect our remaining natural forests and woodlands from the unregulated charcoal industry while enabling rural farmers to tap into global climate finance through carbon credit monitoring.

The Cadres of the New Economy

The 10-Fold Growth Strategy emphasizes the creation of "leadership cadres" to manage the economy. Kijani has developed a 1,000-strong workforce of Parish, Branch, Area, and Regional



Coordinators deployed across 30 districts, supported by an office based management team. Every two months, Kijani recruits and trains a cohort of 80 to 100 interns from these districts. Up to 80 per cent of the trained interns are formally employed by Kijani for deployment to provide the requisite

extension services to farmers like Labong.

This investment in human capital ensures that Kijani's knowledge of climate-smart agroforestry and soil health amendment is internalized by every participating farmer. As Kijani Chief Executive Officer Quinn Neely said in a Presser in March 2026, "the Research and Development Farm where interns are trained is the engine behind this breakthrough," adding that "when people come to help and learn, the whole community learns".

To underwrite this massive expansion, Kijani is proposing to government the establishment of a UGX10 billion Patient Capital Fund. Disbursed at UGX 2.5 billion over four years, this fund could finance the establishment of 10,000 acres of woodfuel

plantations across northern Uganda, that shall supply sustainably farmed charcoal for both the local and international export markets. For large landowners unable to mobilize capital for commercial crop farming, sustainable woodfuel plantations financed through this Patient Capital Fund is a positive

signal that the government and private sector are willing to share the long-term risks of environmental restoration.

This financial backing, combined with diversified income streams – ranging from short-term incentive payments to long-term carbon credit revenue – ensures that the wealth generated is both equitable and enduring along the entire lifecycle of the farmer.

A Blueprint for the Nation

The governance that makes this field-to-market work possible is grounded in NDP IV's integrated approach to Agro-industrialization, natural resources management, and innovation.

As the sun approaches noon, the policy framework enabling sustainable charcoal farming in Uganda is no longer a distant abstraction. It is the framework that makes Labong's woodlot a "growing bank account" possible. By aligning every sapling with the strategic goals of the 10-Fold Growth Strategy, Northern Uganda is proving that its path to a USD 500 billion economy is paved with private sector ingenuity, local empowerment, and technological innovation, for long-term climate resilience.

From a Single Seed in Paibona to 21 Million Trees

GULU - One sunny afternoon in December 2019, Paul Mukiibi, a co-founder of Kijani Forestry and now Director for Expansion, headed north of Gulu Town on an ambitious and uncertain mission: to convince a sceptical community in Paibona Parish, then part of Paicho Sub-County in Gulu District, to embrace a new way of thinking about their landscape.

His goal was to establish a community-run tree nursery so that farmers could cost-effectively raise indigenous tree seedlings for a new enterprise: sustainably farming woodfuel trees intercropped with traditional food crops for charcoal production. His vision was of smallholder farmer households across the Acholi Sub-Region doubling or tripling their household incomes by intercropping traditional food crops with woodfuel trees in order to meet the growing demand for charcoal in a sustainable manner.

The reception was not immediate. After a repeated visit in January 2020, Mukiibi found a community grappling with mixed feelings. It wasn't until a local member offered a piece of land for the nursery that the tide began to turn. "There was relief when the nursery was successful and I saw how excited the farmers were to take seedlings from the farm," Mukiibi recalls. That spark of excitement in Paibona was the catalyst for what has since become a massive agroforestry movement that has spread contiguously from Gulu District in the Acholi Sub-Region to 28 other districts in the Lango, Bunyoro, Karamoja, Tooro, and now Teso Sub-Regions.

From 1 to 7,375 Farmer Groups

One innovation unique to Kijani has made this revolutionary uptake of innovative agroforestry possible: the Tree Nursery Hub. Noticing that smallholder farmers can ill afford the cost of buying and transporting tree seedlings from commercial tree nurseries to their farms, Paul Mukiibi



Retired Chief Justice Alfonse Chigamoi Owiny Dollo receives a rare Ice-Cream Bean (*Inga edulis*) seedling from Kijani Directors Jon Trimarco and Michael Tebere/Courtesy

decided to take the tree nursery to the farmer instead! Kijani Forestry now supplies farmers with tree seeds, potting bags, watering cans, and technical expertise; the farmers provide the land, labour, and building materials for establishing the Tree Nursery Hubs.

This co-creation approach has impacted a community-based network of Tree Nursery Hubs around which farmer groups are empowered to plant and grow trees with the support of a young cadre of Farmer Coordinators recruited locally and trained by Kijani. As of end of April, this Tree Nursery Hub Model had registered 7,375 Farmer Groups to raise and plant over 21 million trees towards Kijani Forestry's 2026 target of 30-Million Trees.

The Farmer Group is a vital safety net as each acts as a steward for their own local nursery hub. The Nursery Hub

does not only provide the seedlings necessary for initial planting; it also retains seedlings required for gap filling in the course of the year. Regular maintenance of the Nursery Hub is thus critical to ensuring a high survival rate of trees beyond the critical first year of growth.

This decentralized approach has allowed Kijani to scale at a breathtaking pace. The Acholi Sub-Region has so far remained the heart of the operation, boasting 53,098 farmers across the eight districts of Acholi. In Lango there are 28,932 active farmers. Combined with Kijani's efforts in Bunyoro, Karamoja, Teso, and Tooro, a massive network of 89,368 farmers operating 7,375 Nursery Hubs is now rewriting Uganda's environmental future through innovative agroforestry.

Women Empowerment Through Trees

The most significant achievement is the social transformation occurring within these farmer groups. The data reveals a powerful story of gender inclusion: of the total farmer population of 89,368 as of end of April, 39,179 or 43.8%, are women. In districts like Agago (52.7%) and Otuke (51.2%), female farmers actually outnumber their male counterparts, taking a leading role in managing the nurseries and securing their households' financial future.

Restoring Scars

To understand the full significance of Kijani Forestry's work, one must look at Uganda's record at tree cover loss: from 52% in 1900 down to 8% in 2016 and clawing back up, slowly but surely, to 13.5% today!

Through its community-based network of Tree Nursery Hubs and Farmer Groups engaged in incentivized agroforestry for wood fuel and timber, Kijani is contributing trees to Uganda's national target of restoring tree cover to 24% by 2040.

For Northern Uganda, Kijani Forestry's work holds even more significance: the Uganda National Household Survey Report 2023/24 shows that more than half the households in the Acholi (50.3%), Lango (51.7%), Teso (60.2%), Karamoja (88.5%), and West Nile (51.6) Sub-Regions fall within the poorest 40% of Uganda's population. Through its innovative agroforestry approach, Kijani Forestry is laying a strong foundation for lifting northern Uganda out of poverty with improved household incomes.

What began as a single man's journey to convince a village is blossoming into a nationwide phenomenon. Kijani Forestry has proven that when you combine local land, community leadership, and the right species, you don't just plant trees, you grow forests for a dignified future.

Top trees planted toward Kijani's 30m-tree target

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Among Kijani Farmers, the choice of which trees to grow is as important as choosing which crops to plant: both decisions are important for sustenance and household income.

Kijani's philosophy is rooted in the belief that for trees to survive, they must serve the people who grow them. Beyond the critical goals of carbon sequestration and biodiversity, these trees are planted and grown for six specific purposes: timber, woodfuel, livestock fodder, bee forage, soil improvement, and live fencing.

To date, Kijani's farmers have planted a staggering 20,787,218 trees. The diversity of the species reflects the wide range of the farmers' needs.

At the centre of this diversity is Giant Lira (*Melia volkensii*), with more than 6.8 million trees already planted, making it a living savings account for farming households. Its fast growth and termite-resistant timber make it a dependable source of household wealth. For many families, these trees are their pension fund, maturing into timber that pays for school fees, health, and other milestones that seasonal crops cannot always secure.

Alongside Giant Lira, White

Teak (*Gmelina arborea* or *Oywelo-Gwok* in Acholi), has taken root across the region, with over 5.5 million trees planted. *Gmelina* is prized for its versatility, serving both as prized timber and as a renewable source of biomass for charcoal. The versatility starts in year 5 of growth, when the tree is mature enough for charcoal production. At our R&D Farm, we observed that not all trees grow straight and tall; the bendy stragglers that make poor timber are thinned out for charcoal. This provides a sustainable alternative to cutting indigenous forest or woodland, thus helping solve the energy insecurity dilemma while creating new economic opportunities.

Also at 5.5 million is White Thorn (*Acacia polyacantha* or *Ongono/Otoko* in Acholi). This unique species plays a different but equally vital role in smallholder farming in northern Uganda: providing fast-growing living fences that secure land boundaries and protect crops from livestock. They are the socio-economic guardians of the landscape, ensuring that mixed farming does not pit herder against farmer. But it does even more: as it provides good charcoal every fifth year,



Kijani's Catherine Arach shows agronomists from Uganda Tobacco Services (UTS) around Kijani's Research and Development Farm in Paicho Sub-County in February 2026/Courtesy

we recommend planting a new row or rows each year for four to six consecutive years. This allows the farmer to harvest a row each year in rotation from year five onwards, provided the coppice is well managed.

Complementing this is the Nile Tulip (*Markhamia lutea* or *Sambya* in Acholi), with 1.1 million trees planted. Known for its dense wood and long-burning charcoal, farmers

are learning to value the Nile Tulip as a soil improver: providing mulch, which enhances soil-moisture retention and increases organic matter. Its timber is also fairly resistant to termites, and is used for furniture, tool handles, poles, posts, and props for supporting banana trees. The species also provides useful shade and acts as a windbreak. The flowers provide good bee

forage.

Beyond these dominant tree species, Kijani also promotes heritage trees like the Umbrella Tree (*Maesopsis eminii* or *Musizi* in Luganda) and Mahogany (*Kyaha anthotheca* or *Tido* in Acholi), which, though fewer in number, represent a commitment to biodiversity and premium timber markets.

Kijani Beyond the Forest

A Day of Compassion and Care at Pajule Health Centre IV

PAJULE - While Kijani Forestry is justly celebrated for getting farmers to put trees in the ground for environmental impact, the heart of the organization beats for the people who call those landscapes home. Late last month, this commitment was brought to life when a dedicated team of 18 employees swapped their forestry tools for cleaning brushes, supplies and care packages to lend a hand at Pajule Health Centre IV in Pader District.

The mission, led by Enock Ahereza of the Human Resources Department, was an effort to support both the facility and its patients. The team's primary focus was on improving local sanitation and patient wellbeing.

"We participated in cleaning the paediatrics and maternity wards, ensuring a safer, more hygienic environment for mothers, children, and medical staff," says Ahereza. He added that the team distributed 57 care packages to patients. Each pack contained essential relief items, including soap, toilet paper, and food items. Beyond material aid, the Kijani team spent time offering encouragement and



Kijani Staff join in the cleaning of Pajule HC IV/Courtesy

reassurance to those in care, significantly boosting patient morale.

True to Kijani's green mission, the visit included a symbolic tree-planting exercise along the facility's boundaries and common areas. These Mahogany trees were carefully selected to provide future shade and improve air quality, creating a natural canopy where patients can eventually rest and breathe fresh air

away from the wards.

For the Kijani team, this visit was a reminder that environmental sustainability and community development go hand-in-hand.

Reflecting on the day, Ahereza noted that the organization's purpose extends far beyond technical metrics. "At Kijani, it is not only about counting trees and calculating forest cover, we care about

people too, and this gesture is to give back to the community."

As those newly planted trees grow to shade the grounds of Pajule Health Centre IV, they will stand as a living testament to Kijani's promise: to nourish the land and the people of Northern Uganda in equal measure.



Caroline Amongi, a nurse at Pajule HC-IV plants a mahogany seedling in the compound/Courtesy

Kijani staff Kevin Akello hands over a Mahogany seedlings at Pajule HC IV/Courtesy